Fulfilled Prophecies

The Bible's Last Temple Is A People, Not A Building

By Dan Maines

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Introduction

† From Genesis to Revelation, one of the great themes of Scripture is the dwelling place of God. God dwelt among Israel in the tabernacle, then His glory filled the Temple, then the Word became flesh and dwelt among His people, and finally the apostles declared that God's people themselves were His temple.

† This progression matters because the Bible doesn't end with God returning to a stone building in Jerusalem. It ends with God

dwelling with His people, with no physical temple needed in the New Jerusalem because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple (Revelation 21:3, 22).
† The old covenant sanctuary was never God's final destination. It was a shadow pointing toward Christ and the greater spiritual house He would build (Hebrews 8:5; 9:11).
† Follow the dwelling place through Scripture and the pattern becomes unmistakable, tabernacle, Temple, Christ, His people, New Jerusalem. The Bible's last temple isn't a rebuilt building. It's a redeemed people living in the presence of God.

Exodus 25:8
Have them construct a sanctuary for Me, so that I may dwell among them.
† The purpose of the tabernacle was God's dwelling among Israel. The sanctuary wasn't important merely because of its materials, furniture, sacrifices, or priesthood. Its significance came from the presence of God among His covenant people.
† This established a pattern that runs throughout Scripture. God desired to dwell with His people, but under the old covenant His presence was represented through a physical sanctuary separated by curtains, priests, sacrifices, and restricted access (Exodus 26:31-33).
† The tabernacle therefore wasn't the final dwelling place of God. It was an earthly representation pointing toward something greater, where God's presence wouldn't be confined behind a veil in a physical sanctuary (Hebrews 9:8-9).

1 Kings 8:10-11
And it happened that when the priests came from the holy place, the cloud filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord.
† When Solomon's Temple was dedicated, the glory of God filled the house. The portable tabernacle had given way to a permanent structure in Jerusalem, but the underlying purpose remained the same, God dwelling among His covenant people.

† Yet Solomon understood that the building couldn't literally contain the infinite God. He immediately acknowledged that even heaven and the highest heaven couldn't contain Him, much less the house Solomon had built (1 Kings 8:27).
† This is critical. Scripture itself never presents the stone Temple as God's ultimate dwelling place. The building served a covenant purpose for a limited period while God's redemptive plan moved toward Christ.

John 2:19-21
Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews then said, "It took forty-six years to build this temple, and yet You will raise it up in three days?" But He was speaking about the temple of His body.
† Jesus made a revolutionary shift in the biblical temple theme. Standing in the shadow of Jerusalem's magnificent sanctuary, He identified His own body as the true temple.
† The religious leaders were thinking about stones, construction, and Herod's Temple. Jesus was speaking about Himself. God's presence among humanity was no longer centered ultimately in a building, it was centered in Christ.
† This explains why John's Gospel had already declared that the Word became flesh and dwelt among them (John 1:14). Jesus was God's presence among His people in a way the tabernacle and Temple could only anticipate.
† Once Christ became the true temple, rebuilding another physical sanctuary could never represent progress in God's redemptive plan. It would be a return to the shadow after the reality had arrived (Colossians 2:16-17).

John 4:21-24
Jesus said to her, "Believe Me, woman, that a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, because salvation is from the Jews. But a time is coming, and even now has arrived, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such

people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."
† Jesus directly announced the end of geographical worship centered in Jerusalem. He didn't tell the woman that Jerusalem would temporarily lose its importance only to become the center of worship again thousands of years later.
† He contrasted location-based worship with worship in spirit and truth. The movement was away from sacred geography and toward the spiritual reality accomplished through Him.
† This destroys the idea that God's redemptive plan requires another physical temple in Jerusalem. Jesus said the hour was coming when worship wouldn't be centered there. The New Covenant doesn't move God's people back to Jerusalem, it brings them into direct access to the Father through Christ (Ephesians 2:18).

1 Corinthians 3:16-17
Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone destroys the temple of God, God will destroy that person; for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are.
† Paul couldn't have made the transition clearer. God's people are His temple because God's Spirit dwells in them.
† The church at Corinth wasn't standing in a future rebuilt sanctuary. They themselves were the sanctuary. The defining characteristic of God's temple had always been His presence, and now His Spirit dwelt within His people.
† Notice that Paul doesn't describe believers as temporary substitutes until God returns His attention to a stone building. He identifies them as God's holy temple. The dwelling place has moved from architecture to people.
† This wasn't merely language about individual spirituality. Paul was addressing the gathered body of believers. Together they formed God's temple, anticipating his even fuller explanation of this truth to the Ephesians (Ephesians 2:21-22).

2 Corinthians 6:16
Or what agreement does the temple of God have with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, I will dwell among them and walk among them; And I will be their God, and they shall be My people.
† Paul again says, we are a temple of the living God. He then connects the church directly with the ancient covenant promise that God would dwell among His people.
† The promise wasn't ultimately fulfilled by constructing a larger building. It was fulfilled by God dwelling in His redeemed people.
† The language, I will be their God, and they shall be my people, reaches its climax in Revelation's description of the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:3). Paul and Revelation are describing the same covenant reality, God dwelling with His people.

Ephesians 2:19-22
So then you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.
† Paul brings the entire temple theme together. Believers aren't traveling toward a future physical temple. They're being built together into a holy temple in the Lord.
† Christ is the cornerstone, the apostles and prophets form the foundation, and believers are the living structure. This temple isn't made with limestone, cedar, gold, or marble. It's made from people joined together in Christ.
† Paul specifically calls this temple a habitation of God in the Spirit. That's the purpose first announced in the tabernacle, that God would dwell among His people, now brought into its New Covenant reality.
† This also explains why Jew and Gentile are included in the

same building. The dividing wall has been removed, and both have access to the Father through one Spirit (Ephesians 2:14, 18). God's final temple isn't national or geographical. It's covenantal and spiritual.

1 Peter 2:4-5
And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by people, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices that are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.
† Peter uses the same temple imagery as Paul. Jesus is the living stone, and believers are living stones being built into a spiritual house.
† The language couldn't be further removed from the expectation of another physical temple. Peter doesn't describe believers gathering stones for a future sanctuary. He says they are the stones.
† The priesthood also changes with the house. God's people are a holy priesthood offering spiritual sacrifices through Jesus Christ. Physical temple, physical priesthood, and animal sacrifices give way to their New Covenant realities (Hebrews 13:15).
† Peter was writing while the Jerusalem Temple was still standing, yet he identified believers in Christ as God's spiritual house. The old structure was still physically present, but God's redemptive purpose had already moved beyond it.

Hebrews 3:5-6
Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken later; but Christ was faithful as a Son over His house-whose house we are, if we hold firmly to our confidence and the boast of our hope.
† Hebrews says whose house are we. God's house is identified with His people under the authority of Christ.
† Moses served within the old covenant house, but Christ rules

as Son over the greater house. The movement of Scripture isn't toward restoring Moses' system. It's toward the completed house established through Christ.
† This is consistent with Hebrews' larger argument. The old sanctuary, priesthood, sacrifices, and covenant were shadows pointing toward better realities in Christ (Hebrews 8:6; 9:11; 10:1).

Revelation 21:2-3
And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is among the people, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them,
† Revelation brings the biblical dwelling-place theme to its climax. The New Jerusalem is described as both a city and a bride. This isn't ordinary architectural language. It's covenant language describing God's redeemed people.
† The announcement deliberately echoes the purpose of the original tabernacle, God dwelling among His people. What began with a tent in the wilderness reaches fulfillment in God's permanent presence with His covenant people.
† The movement is complete, from God dwelling among Israel through a sanctuary, to God dwelling in Christ, to God dwelling in His people, to the New Jerusalem where His presence defines the entire city.

Revelation 21:22-23
I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illuminated it, and its lamp is the Lamb.
† This is the decisive conclusion. The Bible ends its temple story by explicitly saying that John saw no temple in the New Jerusalem.
† Why isn't there a physical temple? Because the Lord God

Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The symbol has disappeared because God's immediate presence has become the reality.
† Revelation doesn't end by rebuilding what Jesus and the apostles moved beyond. It ends with the complete fulfillment of everything the tabernacle and Temple represented, God dwelling with His people through the Lamb.
† A future return to an earthly temple, Levitical priesthood, and sacrificial system would reverse the entire direction of the New Testament. Scripture moves from shadow to reality, from physical sanctuary to Christ, and from restricted access to God's dwelling among His people (Hebrews 10:19-22).
† The Bible's last temple isn't a building in Jerusalem. The Bible's last temple is the fulfilled dwelling of God with His people in Christ.

Historical References
† Josephus described the Jerusalem Temple as an extraordinary and magnificent structure before its destruction, and he recorded its devastation by the Romans in AD 70. Its physical greatness couldn't prevent the judgment Jesus had announced against Jerusalem and its house (Josephus, Wars of the Jews, Books 5-6; Matthew 23:37-38; 24:1-2).
† Josephus recorded the burning and destruction of the Temple during the Roman siege. The sanctuary that had dominated Jewish religious life was physically removed, exactly within the generation to which Jesus had spoken (Josephus, Wars of the Jews 6.4; Matthew 24:34).
† Tacitus also described the Roman siege of Jerusalem and the Temple within the city, providing an independent Roman witness to the historical setting of Jerusalem's destruction (Tacitus, Histories, Book 5).
† Eusebius later connected Jerusalem's catastrophe with the judgment that followed the rejection of Christ and recorded the tradition that believers escaped from Jerusalem before the war (Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, Book 3, Chapters 5-7).
† These historical witnesses don't establish the theology,

Scripture does. They confirm the historical destruction of the old sanctuary while the apostolic writings identify Christ and His people as God's New Covenant dwelling place.

How It Applies To Us Today

† We don't need a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem to experience the presence of God. In Christ, believers already belong to the dwelling place God promised to establish.

† We don't need an earthly priesthood standing between us and God. Through Christ we have access to the Father by the Spirit (Ephesians 2:18).

† We don't need animal sacrifices because Christ's sacrifice accomplished what those sacrifices could only anticipate (Hebrews 10:10-14).

† We don't need sacred geography because Jesus moved worship beyond Jerusalem and declared that true worship would be in spirit and truth (John 4:21-24).

† We aren't waiting for God to move back into a building. God's people are His spiritual house, His holy temple, and His dwelling place in the Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16; Ephesians 2:21-22; 1 Peter 2:5).

† The New Jerusalem isn't calling believers back to the old Jerusalem. It reveals the completed New Covenant reality where God dwells with His people and the Lamb is the light of the city (Revelation 21:2-3, 22-23).

† The story that began with Make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them ends with Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men. That's the Bible's temple story from beginning to fulfillment.

Q & A Appendix

Q: Does Bible prophecy require a third physical temple to be built in Jerusalem?

A: No. The New Testament moves in the opposite direction. Jesus identified His body as the temple, Paul called believers God's temple, Peter called believers a spiritual house, and Revelation's New Jerusalem explicitly has no physical temple

because God and the Lamb are its temple (John 2:19-21; 1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 1 Peter 2:4-5; Revelation 21:22).

Q: Why did God command Israel to build the tabernacle?
A: It represented His dwelling among His covenant people and anticipated the greater dwelling that would come through Christ (Exodus 25:8; Hebrews 9:8-9).

Q: Was Solomon's Temple God's permanent dwelling place?
A: No. Solomon himself acknowledged that even heaven couldn't contain God, much less the house he had built (1 Kings 8:27). The Temple served its purpose within the old covenant until the greater reality came through Christ.

Q: If believers are God's temple, when did that begin?
A: The apostles were already teaching this before Jerusalem's Temple was destroyed. Paul told first-century Christians that they were God's temple and God's dwelling place in the Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16; Ephesians 2:21-22).

Q: What are the stones in God's New Covenant temple?
A: God's people are the living stones, with Jesus Christ as the foundational living stone and cornerstone (1 Peter 2:4-5; Ephesians 2:20).

Q: Why does Revelation say there is no temple in the New Jerusalem?
A: Because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. God's presence is no longer represented through a separate physical sanctuary (Revelation 21:22).

Q: Would rebuilding a temple restore something Christianity is missing?
A: No. Christianity isn't waiting for the restoration of old covenant shadows. Christ provided direct access to God, established the spiritual house, and brought His people into the greater New Covenant reality (Hebrews 10:19-22; Ephesians

2:18-22).

Q: What is God's dwelling place now?
A: God's dwelling place is His people in Christ. The apostles call believers God's temple, God's spiritual house, and God's habitation in the Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16-17; Ephesians 2:21-22; 1 Peter 2:5).

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †
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Source Index
† Exodus 25:8; 1 Kings 8:10-11; John 2:19-21; John 4:21-24; 1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 2 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 Peter 2:4-5; Hebrews 3:5-6; Revelation 21:2-3; Revelation 21:22-23
† Josephus, Wars of the Jews, Books 5-6; Tacitus, Histories, Book 5; Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, Book 3, Chapters 5-7

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